THE REAL PROBLEM
&
THE REAL SOLUTION

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In The Name Of Allah, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful

THE REAL PROBLEM
&
THE REAL SOLUTION

The Relationship between Concept and Conduct

Man faces many things in life and he cannot deal properly with any of them unless he forms a concept about the nature of the particular thing he is faced with and his own relationship to it. Right or wrong, a concept has to be formed about everything and until a concept is formed no man can decide about what he should do and what attitude he should adopt towards a particular thing. This experience forms a part of everyone's daily life. Whenever you meet a person you need to know who he is, about his position and status, his personal qualities, and the kind of relationship that exists between you. You cannot determine how to deal with him until these questions have been answered.

In the absence of any information, you still have to form a conjectural opinion on the basis of appearances and whatever conduct you adopt towards him is dictated by the opinion you have formed. You eat those sort of things which according to your knowledge or conjecture have food value. The things you throw away or make use of; the things you adore or loathe; the things you fear or love – varying attitude towards all these things is regulated by the opinion which you have formed

about their nature and properties and your relationship with them.

The correctness or impropriety of your behaviour towards these things is dependent upon the right or wrong opinions you have formed about them. The validity or invalidity of what your do depends on whether you have formed your opinion about them on the basis of knowledge or from conjecture and whim or from empirical observation. A child, for instance, sees fire and on the basis of plain observation forms the opinion that it is an attractive, glittering plaything. This opinion leads it to stretch out its hands to catch hold of the fire. Another man sees the same fire and through conjecture or whim comes to the conclusion that it embodies in itself some attribute of Divinity or, at least, is an emblem of Divinity. On the basis of this conclusion, he determines to bow his head in prayer before the fire, thus signifying his relationship to it. A third man looks at the fire. He begins to investigate into its nature and properties and through knowledge and research arrives at the conclusion that fire can bake, burn or heat things. He further forms the concept that his relationship with fire is like that of master with his servant. Fire, in his opinion, is neither a plaything nor a deity. It is a thing which can be pressed into service for cooking, burning or heating purposes, whenever the need arises.

Among the foregoing different attitudes, those of the child and the fire-worshipper are definitely based on ignorance. Experience negates the child's opinion that fire is a plaything. The concept of the worshipper of fire

that fire is God or an emblem of godhood is based upon whim and caprice rather than on any proof furnished by true knowledge. In contrast to both these opinions, the attitude of the man who regards fire as a useful agent in the service of man is a scientific attitude as it is based upon firm knowledge.

THE BASIC PROBLEMS OF LIFE

Keeping this premise in mind let us turn our attention to some fundamental questions. Man finds himself living on this planet. He possesses a body which is endowed with diverse possibilities. A magnificent expanse of earth and sky lies before him. This universe contains an endless variety of things and man has the power to press all these things into his service. Man is surrounded by countless millions of other human beings, animals, plants and minerals and his life is inextricably linked with all of them.

Given this, how it possible to imagine that man could adopt a mode of dealing with these things first forming an opinion about his own self, the nature of the things which surround him and the position in which he stands in relation to them? Is it possible for a person to adopt a way of life without determining who he is and what he is; whether he is responsible or irresponsible; whether he is independent or subordinate to someone else? If he is in a subordinate position, who is his superior, and if he is responsible to whom is he

accountable? Has this worldly existence any purpose, and if it has, what is it?

Similarly, can a person propose to use the powers with which he has been endowed without first deciding whether these powers belong to him or are a gift from someone else? Is he going to be called to account for the way he uses his powers? Is the use of his powers to be regulated by himself or by someone else? In the same way, is it possible for a man to adopt a particular kind of behaviour towards the things which from part of his surroundings without ascertaining whether he himself is their master or someone else? Does he have unlimited power over them or are his powers restricted? If his powers are confined within bounds who sets the limits?

Likewise, can a man devise a mode of behaviour towards his fellow men without first forming a definite opinion as to what constitutes the ideals of human society? What is the basis of distinction and disparity between man and man? What are the motive forces underlying friendship and animosity, harmony and discord, co-operation and non-cooperation? Similarly is it likely that a man can adopt an attitude towards the universe as a whole until he arrives at certain definite conclusions about the nature of the organisation of the universe and his own position as a part of this organisation?

On the basis of the premises I have already discussed, it can be stated without hesitation that it is impossible to adopt any real attitude without first forming a concept about all these matters. In fact, every living man, consciously or sub-consciously, holds

certain opinions-indeed is constrained to hold certain opinions – about these essential questions of life; for without such an opinion he would not be able to move even a single step in this universe. It is not necessary for every man to have deliberated in a philosophical manner upon all these questions and to have arrived at particular conclusions about each and every matter after detailed investigation. Most men, indeed, have no definite idea of these questions, nor do they consciously exercise their minds in thinking about them. Despite this, however, all men do form some sort of negative or positive opinion about all these things and the attitude of every man towards life is inevitable controlled by the opinion he has formed.

The Identical Nature of the Bases of Individual and collective Behaviour

As this rule holds good in the case of individuals, so it is also true in respect of groups. These questions lie at the root of human life and unless matters relating to these questions have been clearly thought out, it is impossible to frame a programme for the body politic and construct a culture and civilization. The moral code of a society will reflect whatever conclusions have been reached concerning these vital questions of life; the concept of morality in any society will inevitably be shaped in accordance with them. The various institutions of that society will be modelled on these same conclusions, indeed the whole fabric of society will be moulded by them.

There can, in fact, be no two opinions on this matter. The attitude of an individual or a society will be determined by the nature of the conclusions arrived at in answer to the questions we have outlined. If you wish, you may analyse the attitude of any individual or society and very easily ascertain their conclusions about life's basic questions since they provide the motive force for their existence. It is quite impossible for individual or collective behaviour to be at variance with the nature of the conclusions reached in answer to these questions. Words and actions may disagree but the nature of the conclusions that dwell in the inner self of a man cannot conflict in any case with the nature of his practical behaviour.

DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE

Let us take a step further. All the fundamental problems of life, whose solution is imperative for man's active existence, are in essence metaphysical. The answer to these questions is not written on the horizon for every man to read when he arrives in this world, nor is the answer self-evident in such a way that everyone can easily comprehend it. This is the reason that there is no single solution upon which all men agree. Men have always held divergent opinions on these questions and various men have found various solutions to them. The question which now presents itself is what the possible solutions to these problems are, what means have been

adopted to solve them, and what actual solutions emerge out of all these means.

1. One way of solving these problems is to rely solely upon sense-perception, saying that opinion about all matters should be formed on the basis of sense-perception and observation alone.
2. The second way is to come to a conclusion by means of sense-perception aided by speculation.
3. The third is to put one's faith in the solutions to these problems offered by the Prophets of God who claimed to possess direct knowledge of the Truth.

So far, only the above three means of arriving at a solution to these problems have even made use of and probably only these three ways are possible.

In each of the above cases, different solutions have been found by different means. Each solution gives rise to a particular attitude of mind and a particular parttern of morality and type of culture, which in its basic characteristics is completely different from the attitudes produced by the other solutions. Let me now show you the different solutions to these problems arrived at through these different means and the attitude of mind produced by each solution.

FIRST SOLUTION

When people arrive at a solution in relation to these problems through exclusive reliance upon their own sense-perception then they, in a manner quite natural to

this mode of thought, conclude that this entire universe is the result of mere chance. There is no cause or purpose behind it. It has come into being by itself; it is operating automatically; it will come to an end without producing any consequences. There is nothing in control of the universe, and if there were anything at all, its connection with man's life would be non-existent. Man is a species of animal, whose birth is only accidental. We only know that man exists on this planet called Earth. He entertains certain desires and there are some inner urges which compel him to fulfil these desires. Man is equipped with limbs and organs by means of which he satisfies these wants. Around him, on the face of the earth, there are countless sources of provision and by using his limbs and organs man can satisfy himself by means of these things. Hence there is no other use of the powers of man than the satisfaction of his desires and the fulfilment of his bodily needs to the optimum degree.

The world is no more than a tray on which booty is arrayed for man to lay his hands on. There is no sovereign being over man to whom he is accountable; no spring of knowledge, no source of guidance from which man may derive laws for regulating his life. Hence man is an autonomous being, responsible to no-one. It is his own function to make laws and regulations, to devise means for using his powers and to determine his behaviour towards the things existing around him. If man is in need of any guidance, he should resort to the laws governing the behaviour of animals, the stories

hidden in the stones and the experience of his own history.

Man is either accountable to himself alone or to the human authority which the society of men has given to itself. The present worldly life is the only life there is and the consequences of all actions are confined to this world alone. Hence judgement as to what is right or wrong, useful or harmful, good or pernicious, and what is to be adopted or rejected is based on the effects of actions produced in this world.

This is a complete ideology dealing with the fundamental problems of life on the basis of sensory observation. There is a logical link and an intrinsic compatibility between each train of thought contained in this ideology. A person, therefore, who believes in this dogma can adopt a fairly smooth and consistent attitude to life whether or not this dogma and the attitude produced by it are right or wrong. Now let us look at the type of conduct adopted by a person on the basis of this answer.

Conduct based on Sheer Sensory Experience

An inevitable consequence of this viewpoint of human life is that the entire range of human conduct should be unfettered and devoid of any sense of responsibility. Man will deem himself the sole master of his body and his physical powers. He will, therefore, use his physical powers and the qualities of his head and heart according to his own whims and caprices. He will treat all things and all men whom chance places under his power as his chattels and will feel himself their

master. Only the bounds of natural law and the inevitable restrictions imposed by collective life will set a limit to his authority. His own soul will be devoid of any real moral sense – a sense of responsibility and fear of accountability – and no moral force will check his contumacious action.

Where there are no external restraints upon his action or where he is able to bypass these checks, the natural tendency of this belief-system will impel him to be tyrannical, dishonest, wicked and mischievous. He will temperamentally be selfish, materialist and self-seeking. The satisfaction of his carnal desires and animal needs wil be the be-all and end-all of his life. The only things to hold value in his eyes will be those things which prove serviceable to him in the attainment of his desires. It is natural and quite logical that the believers in this dogma should bear such a character and personality.

There is no doubt, however, that for the sake of expediency and far-sightedness such a person may show traits of sympathy and selflessness. He may spare no pains in the task of national welfare and progress. He may in fact display some sense of responsibility and respect for moral principles. But on a careful observation of his conduct you will find that all his seeming virtues are mere extensions of his selfish motives and carnal desires. He looks at the welfare of his nation or country from purely personal motives: he seeks his own welfare through the betterment of his nation and country. For these reasons, such a man can at best be called a nationalist only.

Characteristics of the Society built upon this Conduct

The distinctive feature of any society fashioned by individuals bearing these characteristics and personalities will be easily recognisable.

The basic principles of its political system will be that sovereignty is vested in human beings: an individual, a family, a class, or the common people. The loftiest collective ideal considered feasible will be that of setting up a commonwealth. This state will be governed by man-made laws. All its laws will be made or amended according to human desires and the experience of arbitrary circumstances. Policies, too, will be formulated and altered in deference to the profit motive or personal expediency. In such a state people who are stronger and excel others in cleverness, craftiness, lies, perfidy, callousness and wickedness will gain ascendancy by force. The leadership of the society and the reins of authority will be in the hands of these people. Their constitution will enshrine the principle:

"Might is right and the weak are always wrong."

The whole edifice of society and culture will be raised on the foundations of self-interest. Increasing permissiveness in the satisfaction of simple lust will become the rule, and standards of morality will be such that maximum freedom for the attainment of sensual pleasures is guaranteed to everyone.

Art and literature will be affected by this philosophy of life and will progressively reflect nudity and pornographic trends.

In the economic domain, sometimes feudalism will hold away; at other times capitalism will gain ascendancy; and sometimes the working classes will establish the dictatorship of the proletariat by violent means. Equity, however, will not form part of any of these economic systems. The conduct of every individual in this society will be dictated by the fundamental conviction that the world and all the wealth contained in it is body and all men are free to lay their hands on it at will and whenever the chance presents itself.

The education system set up for the training of the members of this society will be based on this philosophy of life and will inevitably reflect the same mental attitudes. This system of education will impart to each successive generation the same notion of the world and man's place in the world which I explained earlier. In all fields of knowledge information will be so arranged and presented as to inculcate in the minds of the rising generation the same theories of existence.

The entire training programme will be designed to produce individuals who will adopt this same attitude to life and will completely assimilate into this type of society. I need to say no more to you about the characteristics of this type of educational system as you have had personal experience of such a system.

The attitude of mind I have just analysed springs out of sheer ignorance. This attitude is similar to that childlike state of mind which, relying upon sensory observation, considers fire as an attractive plaything. There is one difference, however. The fallacy of the

child's observation soon becomes apparent through experience. The fire which the child takes as a plaything and wants to hold in his hands is a hot substance. So as soon as it touches the hand, it reveals that it is definitely no longer a plaything. On the other hand, in the other case, the fallacy of observation only becomes manifest after a long time. Indeed most people remain blissfully ignorant of it. The fire which these people hold in their hands has low heat; it does not burn instantly; it simmers on for centuries. However, if a person wishes to learn from common experience, he should ponder that, due to this attitude of mind, the individuals in this kind of society are constantly committing fraud, the rulers are oppressive and tyrannical, the judges are unfair, the rich are covetous and the common people are depraved. This, indeed is a bitter experience for a man and, over and above this, the burning flames of nationalism, imperialism, war and confrontation, invasions and other monstrous acts stemming from the same attitude of mind may force him to conclude that it is based on sheer ignorance rather than on true knowledge of reality. The opinion about the organisation of the universe and man's own position in it which lies at the root this attitude of mind is not consistent with reality, or else it could never have entailed such horrible consequences.

THE SECOND SOLUTION

Let us examine now the second method. The second method of solving the fundamental problems of life is to combine observation with conjecture and speculation and to arrive at solutions to life's problems through

these means. Three different trends of thought arise from this method and each trend of thought produces a particular type of behaviour.

(1) POLYTHEISM

One school of thought believes that the universe is certainly subject to divine control, but that there is not one God, but many. Different forces in the universe are being operated by the hands of different deities. Man's prosperity or misfortune, success or failure, profit or loss depends on the kindness or displeasure of a plurality of gods. The protagonists of this viewpoint have also made an attempt on the basis of their conjectures and speculations to identify these divine powers and those in whom these powers are vested. They have set up those things as gods which have caught their fancy.

Characteristics of Polytheistic Behaviour

The distinctive features of the type of human behaviour which flows out from this viewpoint are quite distinctive.

A Life full of Superstitions

In the first place, a man's whole life becomes plagued by superstitions. He believes that there are many things which exert a good or bad influence on his fortune through supernatural means. He arrives at this conclusion on the basis of subjective thinking: his belief is not supported by any proof or knowledge. The devotee of this faith, therefore, dissipates most of his

energy in entertaining false hopes of good fortune or in imaginary fears of ill-luck. Sometimes, he pins his hopes upon some tomb for the accomplishment of his desires; sometimes he trusts that an idol will turn the wheel of his fortunes to a better end; sometimes he exerts himself to the utmost to propitiate some imaginary god; he feels crest-fallen on seeing a bad omen; sometimes he starts building castles in the air on the appearance of what he considers a good omen. All these things deflect his ideas and endeavours from a natural course and set him on an utterly unnatural course of action.

Endless Cycles of Rituals

Secondly, this viewpoint establishes a lengthy hotch-potch of worship, devotion, offerings, supplications and other rituals. Caught up in this complex web a large part of a man's efforts and activites goes to waste.

Frauds committed by Impostors

Thirdly, the protagonists of this philosophy of polytheism and superstition fall an easy prey to the wily tricks of fraudulent men. A man sets himself up as a king and claims descent from the sun, the moon and other gods. He thus makes the people believe that he is a god too and that the people are his bondmen. Someone becomes an attendant at a shrine or a temple and sets himself up as an intermediary between the people and some supernatural power who rules over the destinies of mankind. Someone becomes a "Pundit" or a "*Pir*" (a

saint) and by the stratagem of amulets, charms, sorcery and the practice of magic, hood-winks the people into believing that through these supernatural means all their desires can be obtained. The progeny of these tricksters form themselves into hereditary family groups and classes whose rights, privileges and influences continue to grow and become entrenched with the progress of time. This belief, therefore, thrusts upon the necks of the people the yoke of slavery to royal families, religious functionaries and spiritual guides.

A Life of Errors

Fourthly, this doctrine provides no enduring base for knowledge, art, philosophy, literature, culture, or politics, nor do men receive from these imaginary deities any guidelines which may be followed in daily life. Man's connection with these gods is limited to the performance of a few religious rituals with the main object of soliciting their favour and support. But as far as the practical affairs of life are concerned, man is left to himself to frame laws and regulations and devise codes of conduct. Hence a society which believes in a plurality of gods follows virtually the same path I described earlier in connection with the society which is guided by a faith based on ignorance. The rules of morality, code of conduct, culture, politics, economic system, knowledge and literature are almost the same in both societies. There is, therefore, no difference in principle between doctrines based on ignorance or faith in polytheism.

(2) ASCETICISM

The second doctrine produced by combining observation with conjecture and speculation lays down that the world is a place of torment; and that physical existence means being constantly subject to pain and torture. The soul is incarcerated in the body of man like a condemned prisoner. All sensations of pleasure, desires and physical needs which are the natural consequences of worldly existence are, in fact, yokes and fetters by which man is enchained. The more man craves for the world and its things, the tighter grows the grip of these chains and severer the torment that lies in store for him. Salvation lied in renouncing all connection with the affairs of the world. It is necessary to strangle all desires, abstain from all pleasure, deny all physical needs and the demands of passion, purify the heart of all affections born out of kinship of flesh and blood, and put this enemy (i.e. one's body and passions) through a severe trial of torture and hardship so that the soul is freed from the dominance of the body. In this way, the soul will become light and refined and will gain sufficient strength to soar in a state of 'Nirvana' to salvation.

This doctrine of asceticism produces certain characteristic features of human behaviour.

Individualism Instead of Collectivism

In the first place, this doctrine changes all human tendencies from collectivism to individualism and from civilised culture to a life in the wilderness. Man turns his face from the world and flees from all

responsibilities. Non-cooperation and renunciation of all personal relationships becomes the hallmark of his life. In short, he adopts negative moral values.

Good Men become Hermits

Secondly, this doctrine impels good men to renounce the world and go into seclusion in order to attain salvation. This paves the way for wicked men to take into their own hands the reins of authority in all worldly matters.

Fodder for Tyrants

Thirdly, with the penetration of this doctrine into a society its people begin to adopt a negative kind of moral value. They exhibit unsocial and individualistic tendencies and become psychopaths. Their creative powers are sapped. They become easy meat for tyrants and it is easy for a despotic government to coerce them into obedience. In point of fact, this doctrine works like magic in taming the common people to become the willing slaves of tyrants.

Conflict with Human Nature

Fourthly, a constant conflict rages between human nature and this doctrine of asceticism and the latter has always to capitulate. When it suffers a setback, the ascetic doctrine seeks refuge in pretences and as an end result, the ritual of penance is invented; the stratagem of allegorical love is employed; and finally, under the cloak of renunciation the protagonists of this belief in

fact display a love for the world which would put even the most covetous lovers of the world to shame.

(3) PANTHEISM

The third viewpoint which emerges out of a combination of observation and conjecture holds that man and universe are unreal. They have no real existence of their own. In fact, there is one Being who has created all these things as a manifestation of Himself and this same Being is working inside them. If we go into details we shall find that there are many ramifications and myriad aspects to this doctrine; yet there is one stand of thought that runs through all of them: all things are mere shadows of one single Being; only this Being exists, all else is illusory.

The doctrine inculcates an attitude in man of doubting the reality of his own existence; he loses all initiative; he considers himself a mere puppet made to dance by someone else or perhaps some external spirit is dancing within it; he forgets himself in the haze of his illusions; his life is rudderless and has no set course or purpose. The train of his thought runs like this: I am only a shadow; no work has been assigned to me; nor can I accomplish anything by myself. That All pervading Being which will hold away from the beginning to the end of the world is the Mover. Everything is accomplished by that Being alone. If that Being is perfect, I also am perfect. Why then should I act? If that Being is endeavouring towards perfection and is heading towards its climax, taking the whole universe in its stride, then as a shadow I shall

automatically move along with this Being. I am only a part; it is not for me to know whether the whole is moving or where it intends to go.

The practical consequences of this doctrine are nearly similar to those which I have already described in the course of the discussion of the doctrine of asceticism. In certain respects the attitudes of the devotees of this belief are akin to those of the protagonists of the doctrine of ignorance. The man who believes himself to be a mere shadow succumbs to his passions, giving free rein to them and not caring in what direction they take him, for according to his way of thinking, it is the universal substance which is the prime mover of his passions and he himself is only a puppet.

These three concepts, like the first one, are in fact based on ignorance and the kind of human behaviour which flows out from them is also characterised by ignorance. None of the above concepts is substantiated by proofs based on knowledge. As a matter of fact, they constitute a variety of concepts formulated on illusory and conceptual grounds. Experience denies their validity. If any one of these doctrines were valid, its practice would not have entailed bad consequences. If you observe that whenever and wherever it is eaten, a particular thing causes pain in the stomach you rightly infer from this that the thing in question does not agree with the anatomy and temper of the human digestive system. In the same manner, when it is an established fact that the doctrines of polytheism, asceticism and pantheism have by and large caused mischief to humanity, it is a positive proof that none of these

doctrines is compatible with Reality and, on this basis, all are invalid.

THE THIRD SOLUTION – ISLAM

Let us turn to the third course of action which is the last report in formulating a viewpoint about the basic problems of life. This course of action is to put our faith in the solution to these problems offered to us by the Prophets of God. The matter may be explained by taking the example of a man who finds himself in a strange land. He has absolutely no acquaintance with the land he is in. He therefore seeks information from one of its people and goes around the land under his guidance.

Whenever you are confronted with a problem of this nature you first of all search out a man who claims to know the way. Your second concern is to satisfy yourself about the reliability of the guide you have found on the basis of circumstantial evidence. Finally, taking him as your guide, you set out on your journey. When it is established by experience that the information provided by him has not misled you, you are convinced that your guide possesses the requisite knowledge and that the information supplied by him about that place is true. This is a scientific method. In the absence of any other scientific method, this one is surely the only correct method of formulating your viewpoint.

Now look! The fact is that the world is a strange place for you. You have no knowledge about its reality. You do not know how the world is regulated. You are not aware under what system of laws this great

'workshop' is operating. What is your own position in this world? And what is the proper attitude you should adopt towards it? These are the questions whose answers you are seeking. In the first place, you conceived the opinion that only what is visible is real. You acted according to this viewpoint but the result was a fiasco. Subsequently, you formed various opinions on the basis of conjecture and supposition and acted upon each of them, but in every case the experience was negative. After all this, the only course left to obtain true guidance is to turn to the Prophets of God.

The Prophets claim to possess true knowledge. After inquiring deeply into the way they lived, it is revealed that they were without exception truthful, trustworthy, pious, selfless and sound-minded beyond any shadow of doubt. There are clearly sufficient grounds for believing in the truth of their claims. It remains to be determined, however, how far their information regarding this world and man's position in it is valid and whether or not any practical evidence is forthcoming which gives the lie to their claims. Further, how far has the information supplied by them been successfully applied in actual experience? If upon scrutiny the outcome of all these inquiries is in favour of the Prophets, we should put our trust in their guidance and adopt only that course in life which is in accordance with their instructions.

As I said earlier, in contrast to other methods based on ignorance, the basis of this method is scientific. If a man bows his head in compliance to this knowledge; If he gives up obstinacy and conceit and acts according to

this knowledge; and if he limits his actions within the bounds fixed by this knowledge, he has set out on the road to success. It is this method which is termed the "Islamic Method".

THE VIEWPOINT OF THE PROPHETS CONCERNING MAN AND THE UNIVERSE

The Prophetic teaching provides us with a series of concepts regarding man and the universe.

Sovereignty Lies with God

This whole universe stretching out before us, of which we are a part, is not an accidental phenomenon. It is a well-organised and well-regulated system which God has created and of which He alone is the Master and Sole Ruler. It is, in fact, a totalitarian system in which all powers are vested in a Central Authority. No-one else shares in the rule of this Totalitarian Sovereign. All forces which operate within the system of this universe are under His direct control. Nothing in the universe dares to disobey His Commands or act on its own accord without His permission. No part of this All-Embracing system can attain independence and naturally should not have autonomy or be irresponsible.

Subservience of Man

Man is born a subject of this Divine State. Man does not become a subject of this state in his physical being

by choice; he is born a subject and it does not lie in his power to hold any other status than that of a subject. Man, therefore, has no right to devise a way of life or to define his own obligations. Man does not own anything in this universe and he has no right to make laws for the use of property which does not belong to him. Man's body and all his faculties are in reality the possession of God and His gift. Hence the right to use his body or physical powers according to his own will is not vested in man. On the other hand, man should use these Divine gifts according to the Will of the Almighty.

Similarly, all things – earth, animals, water, plants, minerals – which form the environment of man are the property of God. They do not belong to man. Hence he has no right to appropriate even these things according to his own will. Man should deal with these things according to the rules set by their Master to Whom they really belong. Similarly, all men who inhabit this earth and whose lives are interlinked with each other are the subjects of God. Therefore, they have no right to formulate rules and regulations for ordering their mutual relations.

As regards the question of what the law of God is the Prophets inform us that the same source from which they received knowledge about the reality of this world and about our own selves has conveyed to them the knowledge of the Divine Law. God Himself revealed this knowledge to them and appointed them to deliver this knowledge to us. It is for us to trust in them and recognise them as the envoy of our true King and receive from them the authentic law of the King.

Limits of Action

The Prophets further explain to us, "You can observe that the entire business of this universe is running according to a system; yet the Emperor is not visible, nor do we see His functionaries at work. You have a sense of freedom and feel free to act according to your wishes; you may behave as if you are the owner of things; you may even bow your heads in subservience and obedience to others who impose themselves as masters; you receive sustenance under all circumstances; you are provided with means of work; disobedience of Divine law does not entail immediate punishment. All this is meant to put you to the test. The Master has endowed you with wisdom, the faculty of deduction and the power of choice between right or wrong.

"The Master has also thrown a veil between His Being – His Dominion – and your own eyes. He wants to put you through a trial and see how you use the powers He has bestowed on you He has blessed you with common sense, freedom of choice, and a measure of autonomy and has left you to act as you desire. If you realise your position as a subject and adopt this position with heart and soul without coercion, you will come out successful in the test of your Master has given you.

"On the other hand, if you fail to realise your status as the subject of God or having recognised your position as subject, you adopt a rebellious course, you will have failed the test. You have been vested with some powers in the world in order that you may be put through a trial. You have been given control and authority over many

things in the world and have granted a whole life-span to prove your worth."

The World is a Place of Trial

The Prophets then inform us that this worldly life is a period of trial; accordingly no accounts shall be called for nor any reward or punishment be dispensed in this world.[1]

Whatever is given here is not necessarily a reward for virtue; it does not signify that God is pleased with you or that He approves of your present deeds. All this is, in fact, given to you as a means of putting you to the test. Goods, wealth, children, Government positions, means of livelihood – all these are bestowed on you in order to test your performance and to enable you to make use of your good or bad qualities. Similarly, all hardships, losses, calamites which overtake you do not

[1] The world in which we live is a 'Physical World' (one which runs on the laws of physical science) and not a 'Moral World' (one which runs on moral laws). Hence under the existing system of the universe, the moral consequences of human actions do not develop fully. They can develop only to the extent to which physical limitations permit them to develop. In other words where the laws of physical existence put up an obstruction, it is impossible for moral consequences to develop. Take an instance. A man kills another person. The moral consequences of a murder will develop only if physical laws lend assistance in investigating the crime, establishing the charge and then enforcing the moral punishment on the culprit. If the physical laws prove abortive, no moral consequences of the murder will ensue. Even if the physical laws do help, the moral consequences of the crime of murder will never fully develop in this world. The mere killing of a person for the person killed does not fulfil the requirements of laws of morality. Hence this world is not a place of punishment; nor can it be so. In order to make this world a 'Place of reward or Punishment' we would need a system of the universe which, in contrast to the present system, was ruled by moral laws and in which physical laws serve as aids to the fulfilment of the former.

necessarily signify the visitation of God's punishment on you for some evil deed. Some of these afflictions are results of certain natural phenomena.

For instance, when an adulterer suffers a venereal disease, it is a physical consequence of his action and not a moral punishment for his evil deed. If he succeeds in getting rid of the disease with medical treatment, he might escape the physical pain of the disease, but will not be exempted from moral punishment. If he repents of his sin, he will be redeemed from moral punishment but this alone will not cure his physical illness.

Some of these hardships fall under the category of trials.

For instance, when a man is afflicted with poverty it is, in fact, a test of his integrity. Is he tempted to use foul means to earn his livelihood or does he remain steadfast in using legitimate means? Does he keep firm in righteousness when oppressed by a multitude of hardships or does he waver and succumb to evil ways?

Some misfortunes occur when one behaves in accordance with a viewpoint which is opposed to reality. In such a case one inevitably suffers a rude shock.

When a man denies the dominion of God over this world and behaves as if he were free from all restraints, he is acting against reality and inevitably comes to grief, for in point of fact God does exist and man is not free from all restraints. The behaviour of such a man may be compared to the example of a person who, taking fire as

a plaything, tries to hold it and burns his hands, for his action is certainly opposed to the hard facts.

In any case, this world is not a 'House of Reward or Punishment'; it is a 'House of Trial'. The consequences of actions which appear in this world cannot be taken as a basis for judging whether a method or an action is righteous or wicked, good or bad and unlawful or permissible. The consequences of worldly actions as they will be established in the Next World will form the real basis of judgement. When the period of grace (the present life) is over, a second life will start in which your deeds will be assessed and judgement will be delivered as to whether you acquitted yourself with credit or ignominiously in your worldly life. The only basis on which you will be judged guilty or not guilty in the next world will be whether firstly, you employed your faculties of observation and reason in the right way and acknowledged the sovereignty of God and the Divine sanction of His commands; secondly, whether you, having recognised the above reality and possessing also freedom of choice, submitted to the sovereign Lord of the universe and acted on His commands without coercion and of your own accord.

SCRUTINY OF THE ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT

A Scientific Concept

The conception of the world and man propounded by the Prophets is perfect. All parts of the viewpoint are logically woven together; there are no linner

contradictions in it. It contains the most perfect interpretation of all the events of the world and fully explains the entire phenomenon of the universe. There is nothing relating to the observation or experience of man which cannot be interpreted in the light of this conception. Hence it is a scientific doctrine and is valid by all definitions of the word 'scientific'. Again no observation or experience has ever been able to explode the validity of this doctrine. Hence it still holds good. It cannot be included among the exploded myths.

If the theories of a particular age refuse to acknowledge the validity of a concept, it does not prove that the concept is false. A scientific doctrine can be proved wrong only by facts and not by theories alone. Hence until it is established that the concept of man and the universe presented by the Prophets has been proved wrong by demonstrable facts, it would be quite unscientific and malicious to regard the viewpoint of the Prophets an exploded myth.

Our observation of the system of the universe also makes this viewpoint appear the most probable. The phenomenon of the marvellous organisation of the universe forces us to the conclusion that it is more rational to believe in the existence of a Supreme Administrator than to deny His existence. Similarly, on the evidence of this vast organisation of the universe, it is much more reasonable to conclude that it is a centralised system and that a Single All-Powerful Authority controls it rather than to infer that the universe is a decentralised system which is ruled over by several different authorities. In the same manner,

upon observing the grand wisdom working behind the glorious management of this universe, it is more rational to infer that the system of the universe is constructed according to a wise design and purpose, and on the same evidence it appears far from reasonable to believe that it is mere chance.

Again when we carefully consider the fact that the system of this universe constitutes a State and man forms a part of this state, it appears quite reasonable to believe that there should be no provision for the independence or unaccountability of man within it. Man's true status is that of a subject. On these grounds this viewpoint appears to us the most reasonable

A Practicable Creed

Looked at from the practical angle this viewpoint appears feasible too. A whole scheme of life complete in every detail emerges out of this creed. Philosophy and ethics, science and crafts, literature and art, politics and system of government in peace and war, international relations – this creed takes care of every aspect of life and all its needs. There is not a single area of life in which a person need look outside of this creed for guidance.

THE IMPACT OF ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY

We have now to observe what sort of attitude to life is engendered by the Islamic ideology and what its consequences are.

Impact on Individual Life

In contrast to other doctrines based on ignorance, the Islamic creed builds up a responsible and disciplined attitude to life among its adherents. Faith in the doctrine of Islam implies a man not considering himself the master of his body, physical powers or anything in the world and also not considering himself free to use them at will Rather these things should be seen as the property of God and made use of inconformity with Divine Law.

A man should take his possessions as a trust from God and while using them, should never forget that he has to render full account for their use to a Supreme Authority from whose sight not a single action is hidden and Who is aware of even the innermost secrets of every individual. A man who gives his allegiance to Islam will abide by a code of rules under all circumstances. He will never let his passions go berserk like an untamed beast. He will never become a tyrant or a corrupt person. His integrity is beyond question and he is trustworthy. There is no need of external pressure to coerce him into obeying the laws. His inner self becomes subservient to a Supreme Moral Discipline which keeps him steady on the path of righteousness and equity even under circumstances when there is no risk of being found out. It is impossible to imagine any better means of producing individuals of such impeccable and dependable character than the fear of Divine retribution and a realisation that all things in man's possession are a trust from God.

Moreover, this view of life not only transforms an individual into a man of action but also diverts his

efforts from the attainment of purely selfish, sensual, or nationalistic ends towards achieving the lofty aims of justice and morality. It is impossible to find a more dynamic, more productive kind of man and one more righteous in action than the one who knows that he has not been sent unto the world without any aim, that God has created him to discharge a particular duty and that the aim of his life is to perform deeds that please God rather than merely living to please himself and his family. He knows that he will have to account completely as to how and to what end he expended his time and energy.

Islam produces individuals of such excellence that it is difficult to imagine that any other viewpoint could inculcate a better sense of values among its individual devotees.

The Impact of Islam on Collective Life

Let us now analyse the impact of the Islamic viewpoint on the collective life of mankind. In the first place, the Islamic faith changes the foundations of human society. According to it all people are the subjects of God. Hence all enjoy equal rights, equal status, and equal opportunities. No individual family, class, nation or race has any superior or preferential rights or rights of dominance over other people. In this way the concept of man's dominance or superiority over other men is rooted out, and all evils rising out of monarchy, feudalism, aristocracy, Brahmanism, Papal rule and dictatorship are instantly dispensed with.

The doctrine of Islam also removes all prejudices of tribe, nation, race, country and colour which have always been the major cause of bloodshed in the world. According to the Islamic faith, the whole earth is the property of God. All men are the progeny of Adam and creatures of God. Merit is attained by virtue of purity of morals and fear of God and not on account of race, genealogy, goods, wealth or the shade of skin. Distinction is conferred on those who fear God most and practise piety and are concerned with the ennoblement of their souls.

Similarly, the Islamic viewpoint completely alters the basis of social ties and relationships, and the differences or distinctions between man and man. Wherever man-made principles form the basis of collective social life, they result in social conflict, divide people into disparate groups and raise insurmountable barriers between these groups. Differences of race, country, nationality or colour cannot be overcome by man-made systems nor do they permit of social mobility from one section of mankind to another. In contrast to this, the Islamic viewpoint establishes the basis of social life upon the secure foundations of firm belief in God and obedience to His commands.

Those who stop bowing down to creatures and bow their heads before the Creator and acknowledge the Divine Law as the governing principle in their lives, all these constitute one community. Those who act otherwise form a separate community. In this way, all differences are levelled, save one. And even this

difference is not insurmountable. It is possible at all times for a person to change his convictions and his way of life and thus move out of one group to enter the other fold. If it were possible to form a united community of the peoples of the world, it could only be founded on the principles of Islam. All other doctrines divide mankind. Islam welds peoples together into one united brotherhood.

The Sovereignty of God

Subsequent to the introduction of these reforms the society which emerges on the principles propounded by Islam is a society, the attitude, spirit and social structure of which undergoes a complete transformation. In this society, the basic principle on which the state is formed is that sovereignty lies with God, not with man. God is the Sovereign Ruler. He is the Law-giver. Man functions only as the vice-regent of God. To start with, the political system of Islam wipes out all those evils which arise in a system in which the laws are framed by men and man rules over man. The striking distinction in this kind of political system is that a spirit of piety and service to God pervades it.

The rulers and the ruled both understand that they are directly accountable to God Almighty who is Omnipresent, the Knower of the seen and the unseen. The citizen pays taxes as donations in the service of God; the tax-collectors consider it the wealth of God and themselves only as its trustees. From the ordinary policeman to the judge and governor, every state official performs his functions in the same state of mind in

which he prays to God, for both are equally acts of devotion to the Almighty and in both cases the same spirit of piety and dread of Divine authority is required.

The virtues looked for in the candidates whom the citizens elect from among themselves to act as the representatives of God on earth are fear of God, trustworthiness and integrity of character. In this process only those persons are elevated to positions of power and authority in society who surpass other citizens in moral excellence. Islam permeates society and culture with the same spirit of piety and purity of morals. The keynote of this civilisation is service to God rather than slavery to passions. Almighty God is the Arbitrator between man and man; relations among men are regulated by the law of God. Since the Law-Giver is free from all sensuality and self-interest and is All-Knowing and Wise, His Law necessarily averts every possibility for the rise of mischief or tyranny in this society for all times to come. The Divine Law, however, makes due allowance for every aspect of human nature and makes provisions for every human need.

Time does not allow me to present before you a complete picture of the structure of a society based on the principles of Islam. You can, however, form an idea of the kind of attitude, consequences and possibilities which emerge from the viewpoint regarding man and the universe presented by the Prophets of God. It is not a utopian state, the blueprint of which is drawn on paper only. The existence of a society and a state based on this viewpoint is a historical fact. No better citizens and no humanitarian state better than the one created by the

Islamic concept of the universe have ever existed on the surface of the earth in the whole history of mankind.

If after this historically successful experiment an individual is not prepared to accept the validity of the Prophets' viewpoint about the nature of the universe and the position of man in the cosmos, there is no way that such an individual will ever be persuaded, God, angels and the life of the Hereafter are not open to the direct view of any man. In the absence of direct observation, experience is the best guide in determining the validity and existence of any phenomenon. Take an example. A physician, on examination of his patient, is unable to determine the real defect in his internal system. In such a case, the physician administers various medicines and waits to see which medicine reaches the target in the hidden recesses of the human body and eliminates the defect. The fact that a certain medicine proved efficacious in curing a disease is proof positive that this particular medicine was the only suitable means for removing the defect in the system of the human body. Similarly, if the defects of human life cannot be removed by any other ideological system and can be set right only by the solution offered by the Prophets, it is a proof positive that the Prophets' viewpoint is the right answer to the problems now facing the human race.